

# Meet Jim Millican of Big Delicious Brand

Raleigh, North Carolina



**Jim Millican: Founder of Big Delicious**

**Jim Millican** grew up cooking alongside his dad, a passionate, self-taught cooker. His father, nicknamed “Mule,” was a true Southern gentleman. He instilled in Millican the importance of using quality ingredients and not rushing the cooking process. And, while he preferred to cook simply, his enthusiastic use of spices and seasonings molded Millican’s own cooking flair . . . in a “big” and “delicious” way. Though he always enjoyed preparing substantial, flavorful meals at home, a career in food didn’t come until later. Millican worked in banking as a lender in his past life. His career took him from North Carolina to Chicago. In his work, he called upon small business owners, and he was fascinated by the community he found in the Windy City. “The people I was dealing with actually rolled up their sleeves and worked. And I knew that was something that I wanted to do,” he says. Inspired, he and his brother started toying with the idea of starting their own business. The pair moved back to their native North Carolina and opened a small retail food business, which evolved into four locations around the state’s Research Triangle. “It was a great experience,” Millican says. Though he and his brother eventually

went in different business directions, Millican now had the entrepreneurial bug. “That’s my big thing: Let’s create something from scratch and see if we can go with it.” Looking for a niche to fill in the business world, Millican considered the rise in prepared food appreciation and enthusiasm.

“There’s this whole food culture—foodies, if you will—that love food. And they love certain types of food and preparing food. And that’s great, but there are also tons of people that either don’t have time to cook or they don’t know how. Then there’s an even larger group that’s just too tired to cook that way,” he says. He came up with the idea of a prepared food product designed to feed a group. As an avid sports and social occasion lover, dips seemed like an obvious starting point. He envisioned more than the pre-made, sour cream-and-seasoning packet dips we know from last-minute tailgates and get-togethers. “I sat down to create these recipes, and I said, ‘Look, I’m going to create something that I would like to eat.’” He wanted something made from real ingredients, and he wanted “hearty, good food.”

He began with a North Carolina classic: sausage dip - a cream cheese-based spread of diced ripe tomatoes, green chili peppers, and fresh pork sausage that is served warm. Using his own recipe, he prepared and packaged the product in a commercial kitchen space and sold it directly to local consumers. Demand grew, and he shifted into wholesale by 2019, filling nearby specialty shops and food stores’ frozen sections with his Big Delicious dips. Eventually, he would introduce an original pulled-pork barbecue dip, and then put a unique spin on the familiar Southern cream cheese and pineapple spread by adding country ham - all giving a nod to North Carolina’s pork-happy culture. When the pandemic hit in 2020, Millican pivoted the Big Delicious Brand to reach shoppers who weren’t hitting the grocery stores. They started shipping the frozen dips directly to consumers. By expanding their reach, this North Carolina business now distributes to consumers throughout the entire United States. Millican, who now lives in Raleigh, North Carolina, takes pride operating a Southern business. “I’m inspired by the heritage of the down-to-earth, hardworking, and genuine people who make the South such a wonderful place to live. I live here and love our culture, the people, and the land [...] from the get-go, my charge has been to create food with a distinct Southern tone and flair. It’s meant to be hearty, and to represent Southerners and our way of life.”

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